

O. Henry Hotel
Southwest Corner of North Elm
and Bellemeade Streets
Greensboro
Guilford County
North Carolina

HABS No. NC-233

HABS

NC.

41-GREBO.

3-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. NC-233

O. HENRY HOTEL

Location: Southwest corner of the intersection of North Elm and Bellemeade Streets, Greensboro, Guilford County, North Carolina.

USGS Greensboro Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 17.608910.3992680.

Present Owner: O. Henry Hotel Corporation, P. O. Drawer O, Greensboro, North Carolina 27402 (1978).

Present Use: Vacant, scheduled for demolition with an office complex to be constructed on the site.

Significance: The O. Henry Hotel, built 1917-1919, was designed by W. L. Stoddart, a firm which was responsible for many of the south's better hotels. The hotel, a source of local pride, was constructed from funds raised by the citizens of Greensboro. The O. Henry remained one of the cities' leading hotels from its opening to the early 1960s.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Plans for the construction of the O. Henry were begun in 1917, the hotel opened for business on July 2, 1919.
2. Architect: The building was designed by W. L. Stoddart of New York with Charles C. Hartmann as supervising architect. The firm designed and engineered many of the south's outstanding hotel buildings.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The O. Henry Hotel Corporation.
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: J. L. Crause, a local man, was the contractor and builder. The woodwork was manufactured by the Ottinger Lumber Company. The roofing and sheet metal work including the heating, ventilating and interior duct work was done by William Sullivan and Company. The interior marble, tile, terrazo and composition floors were furnished and installed by McClamoch Company. The Wysong

& Miles Company furnished all structural steel. The heating and ventilating system was installed by B. MacKenzie. The hollow tile was supplied by the Pomona Terra Cotta Company of Pomona, North Carolina. The plaster was supplied by the Southern Gypsum Company of North Holston, Virginia. The Albert Pick Company furnished the hotel (Hotel Monthly, pp. 60, 62 found in Clippings File, Hotels, Greensboro Public Library).

5. Original plans:

"The principal consideration in the planning and construction of the O. Henry has been to provide the highest type of modern hotel accommodations in every department.

While there will be comfortable rooms for the man who wishes to sleep, bathe and shave in comfort, but who must limit his expenditures, yet there will be rooms and suites for the man who wants the comforts and furnishings of a home.

The O. Henry will contain one hundred and seventy guest rooms, each with a private bath. The minimum rate rooms are provided with shower baths, the others with built-in tub baths.

Every floor will have running ice water.

The building will be provided with equipment for enforced ventilation, washed and purified air in all of the public rooms and throughout the kitchen and service pantry of the building.

On the second floor perhaps one of the most interesting features will be the room dedicated to O. Henry, and decorated with photographs, a complete O. Henry library and paintings depicting scenes dear to the heart of O. Henry readers.

The Ball Room or Assembly Hall adjacent to the O. Henry Room, with its large reception room and grand staircase to the Lobby, form the combined social rooms ideal for ball or banquet. A service pantry directly connected with the kitchen below affords prompt and efficient service.

Dedicated to the pleasure of its guests the beauty of this Ball Room will be enhanced by its decorated walls, vaulted ceilings, artistic hangings and ivory-finished woodwork.

With its spacious and inviting entrance on Bellemeade Street the principal features of the O. Henry ground floor are delightfully emphasized in the large and comfortably equipped

Lounging Room, Lobby and Dining Room. The Lounging Room, circular in form, with its "homey" fireplace and cozy alcoves, located at the corner, is a distinct feature of the O. Henry. The Lobby is one of the most attractive of southern hotels. It is an imposing room of pleasing proportions, vaulted ceilings and Caen Stone Wall Treatment and Circassian Walnut Wainscoting. The Mezzanine, located over the office, will provide a comfortable writing room. With decorations all in perfect harmony carried out in the Adams period, this Lobby is a pleasing introduction to the spacious and hospitable O. Henry.

The Dining Room adjoining the Lobby is a continuation of the Lobby treatment, spacious and airy in its furnishings and with an outlook on Bellemeade Street, with a separate entrance direct to the street; with a Mezzanine balcony where the ladies may enjoy their afternoon tea and from which a direct view through the Lobby to the Lounging Room is obtained, viewing all the delightful features of the ground floor. All these give a subtle charm to the O. Henry Hotel" (from a xeroxed publicity brochure in Clippings File, Hotels, Greensboro Public Library).

6. Alterations and additions: The hotel was such a success that within sixty days of the opening, plans were made to add an annex. An old cotton warehouse was converted into the annex. On the exterior of the hotel alterations have been fairly minor: a protruding cornice which ran between the top story windows was removed; and a concrete frieze on the north and east elevations was removed. The original door at the main entrance was replaced. In 1978 the metal marquee over the main entrance, and the two cast iron fluted lampposts that flanked the main entrance were removed. On the interior the lounge to the east was converted into a drugstore. In 1976 the hotel sustained fire and water damage during a fire on the upper floors. It has remained closed since that date.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

For many years Greensboro had been a small town with a population under 4000. Between 1900 and 1920 the population swelled to 50,000 due to the railroads, which led from Greensboro in seven different directions. With an increased amount of travelers coming to and from Greensboro, the need was felt for a first class hotel. Some local citizens formed a committee and decided to build a hotel costing \$350,000 (\$700,000 was actually raised). The hotel was named after O. Henry, the pen name of William Sidney Porter, who was born in Greensboro. The president of the hotel was William Foor who ran a chain of hotels in the south. From 1919 until the late 1950s and early 1960s the O. Henry was one of the state's finest hotels.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Original architectural drawings:

Greensboro, North Carolina, Greensboro Public Library Clippings File, Hotels. Xerox of plans as published in a publicity brochure.

2. Bibliography:

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Greensboro, North Carolina, Greensboro Public Library. Clippings File, Hotels.

Raleigh, North Carolina, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History. Field Notes (by Ruth Little-Stokes).

b. Secondary and published sources:

Arnett, Ethel Stephens. Greensboro, North Carolina--
The County Seat of Government. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1955.

Little-Stokes, Ruth, editor. An Inventory of Historic
Architecture, Greensboro, North Carolina. Greensboro: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History/City of Greensboro, 1976.

Prepared by Dan Curry
Community Planner
City of Greensboro
North Carolina
November 1977

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The O. Henry Hotel was widely acclaimed at the time of its construction as one of Greensboro's finest hotels. Noted more for its spacious interiors than its austere exterior, the hotel was designed by W. L. Stoddart of New York.
2. Condition of fabric: The hotel has deteriorated due to fire and water damage sustained during a fire on the top floors in 1976.

- B. Exterior: The O. Henry Hotel is an irregularly shaped building, eight stories high with a ten-bay front. There is a granite foundation with the first two stories sheathed in concrete. On the north (front) elevation there are segmental arched openings that stretch for two stories. The windows are separated by Doric pilasters. The main entrance has had its original door replaced and was originally emphasized by a metal marquee and flanked by cast iron fluted lamp posts with cartouche bases.

The east (side) elevation is composed of storefronts and their entrances. Above these on the second floor are transoms, although the southernmost are replacements. The north and east elevations have a cornice with an egg and dart molding between the second and third stories.

The upper stories are of red brick laid in Flemish bond. The openings are one-over-one wooden sash windows that appear singly or in combinations of two's and three's. A flush concrete balustrade forms a string course along the base line of the top story. Above the top story is a concrete band that runs along the north and east elevations. This band is ornamented with a garland frieze in relief at each end of the north elevation. The center bays of the north and east elevations at the third story have concrete balconies beneath the windows.

- C. Interior: The first floor is composed of a lobby, lounge and dining room, with the kitchen spaces behind that. The lobby area is a two story vaulted space with mezzanine levels on the west and south sides. The floor is of gray, black and white mosaic. The wooden trim is of walnut and the baseboards are marble. A stairway with Tennessee marble treads leads up to the remaining floors. The main feature of the second floor is the ballroom or assembly hall. The remainder of the second floor, as well as the upper floors are taken up by guest rooms with baths. There are approximately thirty guest rooms per floor.
- D. The Annex: Behind the hotel along the north side is the annex. This building, formerly a cotton warehouse, was completely remodeled on the interior when it was converted into the hotel.
- E. Site: The Hotel is on the southwest corner of North Elm and Bellemeade Streets in the downtown, commercial district of Greensboro.

Prepared by Dan Curry
Community Planner
City of Greensboro
North Carolina
November 1977

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the City of Greensboro with funding from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development in compliance with Executive Order 11593 and a Memorandum of Agreement with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation as a mitigative effort in the construction of an office complex. John A. Burns, AIA, was the HABS project coordinator. The historical and architectural written data was prepared by Dan Curry, Community Planner, City of Greensboro in November 1977. The data was edited and in some cases expanded in the HABS office by Mary Beth Betts in April 1979. Photographs were taken by William Heroy in November 1978.